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Waller County Sheriff's Race: Grenades & Gun-Toting Campaign Managers

PLAINTIFF'S
EXHIBIT

134

Paul Knight

6-7 minutes

There's a pretty interesting election going on for boss of the sheriff's department in Waller County, a mostly rural area on the western border of Harris County. The elected candidate will be the first new sheriff in two decades, because long-time sheriff Randy Smith is retiring. The candidates are:

- Jeron Barnett, a former Harris County deputy who works for the Katy Police Department. He was named the department's 2008 Crime Prevention Officer of the Year. If elected, Barnett will be the first black sheriff in Waller County.

- R. Glen Smith, a former police chief in Hempstead, fired earlier this year after a series of unfortunate events, including an always-dangerous [grenade prank](#) that resulted in an officer's foot being blown off. Two months after the firing, he was hired by the Waller County Sheriff's Department and secured the Republican nomination for sheriff.

Maybe race isn't an issue these days, but considering a [white cemetery/black cemetery](#) debate in Waller County this summer, maybe it is. Barnett's father thinks so.

"I believe there will be some voter irregularities in this campaign," Donald Barnett, who is also serving as his son's campaign manager, tells Hair Balls. "This is the worst county that I have ever been to in my life, from Alabama to Wyoming."

According to Donald, voter turn out for Jeron has been good so far, helped by the student population from Prairie View A&M, which recently resolved a [voter rights lawsuit](#) with Waller County. There have been a few vandalized Barnett campaign signs, but other than that, no real problems.

"[Racism] has not been an issue in my presence, because I carry a 44-40 [pistol] or a double-barrel shotgun," Donald says. "I'm not going to let anybody bother me."

Smith believes that his firing in Hempstead was not warranted, and he says the mayor had suggested that no action be taken by the city council. Race is a non-issue, Smith says, in the sheriff's campaign.

"Most people are decent, conscientious people that are going to vote they think is the best person to be sheriff," he says. "Both of us are in it to make a difference in the county."

-- Paul Knight



Texas has already had to deal with one hurricane this year. If forecasters are correct, it won't be the last of 2020.

Photo by Brandon Navarro

As if 2020 weren't already cruel enough, the widely respected hurricane forecasters at Colorado State University released their updated hurricane season forecast on Wednesday, and it is a doozy.

According to the report, a combination of near historically warm sea surface temperatures combined with low to non-existent wind shear and the potential for La Niña conditions by September across the Atlantic Basin is expected to create one of the busiest seasons on record, rivaling 2005's 28 named storms that included both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

The forecast calls for 24 named storms, 12 hurricanes and five major storms (category 3 or above). That is about double the average of typically busy seasons, which normally have 12-15 named storms. The forecast does include the nine named storms and two hurricanes we have already had this season meaning they are still expect 10 hurricanes and 15 named storms, which is high for an entire hurricane season let alone the last few months.

The statistical peak occurs around September 10 and the season ends on November 30. The majority of storms occur during August and September. With the first two weeks of August appearing to be relatively quiet, we should expect an extremely active six weeks between mid August and the end of September.

And while the season does run all the way through November, Texas typically sees an end to serious threats by about the third week of September. By that time, the first cold front of the year has often moved through, cooling temperatures and impeding the formation of storms. Only five hurricanes have ever made landfall in Texas in October, so it is a fairly rare event.

In the forecast, they believe there is a 74 percent chance of major hurricane landfall along the U.S. coastline this year, nearly evenly split between the East Coast and Florida (49 percent) and the Gulf Coast west of Florida to Brownsville (48 percent). Typically, the numbers for the entire United States are 52 percent for the full season and roughly 30 percent for each of the aforementioned coastlines.

In other words, the chances of a landfall from a major hurricane in the United States are very, very high, much higher than normal.

With nothing immediate on the horizon, this would be a good time to start making preparations just in case. It seems almost unfathomable to think of dealing with a natural disaster in the middle of a pandemic, but this is what we've got. The good news is we just need to make it through September. The bad news is it could be a really rough couple of months.

- [Weather](#)

Jeff Balke is a writer, editor, photographer, tech expert and native Houstonian. He has written for a wide range of publications and co-authored the official 50th anniversary book for the Houston Rockets.

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